

Message Text

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67

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02

TRSE-00 XMB-07 OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01

SCEM-02 INT-08 NEA-10 DRC-01 /219 W

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R 142051Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5583

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY

REF: LONDON 12690

1. THE GENERAL PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE QUEEN'S
SPEECH OPENING THE NEW SESSION OF PARLIAMENT (REF)
COVERED A WIDE RANGE OF ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, FOREIGN AND
DEFENSE POLICY. THE DEBATE WAS CONCLUDED BY A FAVORABLE
VOTE SUSTAINING THE GOVERNMENT.

2. THE WEEK-LONG TRADITIONAL DEBATE WAS GIVEN A BARE
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MINIMUM OF MEDIA COVERAGE THIS YEAR, TO THE EXTENT THAT

IT WAS HARD TO DISCERN FROM THE PRESS THAT A MAJOR DEBATE WAS GOING ON. THIS CAN BE ATTRIBUTED IN PART TO THE PREOCCUPATION OF THE PUBLIC AND MEDIA WITH EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE POSSIBLE DOMESTIC IMPACT OF OIL PRODUCTION CUTBACKS AND THE NOVEMBER 8 BY-ELECTIONS WHICH WERE ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE. ONE EXASPERATED GOVERNMENT WHIP REMARKED TO US THAT HE HAD NEVER HAD A HARDER TIME KEEPING THE GOVERNMENT BENCHES ADEQUATELY FILLED TO FORESTALL A SUDDEN NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE. HE SAID THAT THE LACK OF INTEREST BY MP'S WAS ALSO A NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE SET PIECE NATURE OF THE ANNUAL OPENING OF PARLIAMENT. HE JUDGED THAT MP'S WERE FED UP WITH LISTENING TO LONG EXPOSITIONS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY WHICH WERE ATTACKED WITH COMPLETE PREDICTABILITY BY OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN AND THEN FURTHER DEBATED IN A FASHION THAT, TO MANY MINDS, SUGGESTED THAT COMMENT WAS MORE FOR THE RECORD THAN HOPED-FOR RESULTS.

3. COMMENT: WHATEVER MISGIVINGS WHIPS MAY HAVE HAD, THE GOVERNMENT SEEMS LIKELY TO BE ASSURED OF COMFORTABLE MAJORITIES FOR MOST MEASURES IT WILL BE INTRODUCING IN THE NEW SESSION OF PARLIAMENT. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT A CONSIDERABLE SENSE OF DISSATISFACTION AND FRUSTRATION EXISTS ABOUT THE POLITICAL EFFICIENCY OF CURRENT PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES, SENTIMENTS WHICH CAN BE FOUND BOTH AMONG MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC. NEITHER NEW NOR UNIQUE TO THE BRITISH SCENE, THESE FEELINGS ARE TROUBLING TO THOSE CONCERNED FOR THE VITALITY AND HEALTH OF BRITAIN'S POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THEY LEND WEIGHT TO THE ARGUMENTS OF THOSE FAVORING PARLIAMENTARY REFORM AND INNOVATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT WOULD SEEM LOGICAL AT THIS STAGE TO SEE SOME SHIFT IN THE FOCUS OF POLITICAL ATTENTION AWAY FROM PARLIAMENT, AS THE POLITICAL SYSTEM STARTS ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS WHICH LEADS TO A GENERAL ELECTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: mcintyresh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973LONDON13365
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731135/aaaaazgl.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LONDON 12690
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: mcintyresh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 13 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <13-Jul-2001 by boyleja>; APPROVED <20-Aug-2001 by mcintyresh>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DEBATE ON GOVERNMENT POLICY
TAGS: PINT, UK
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005